

The Classical Weekly

Published on Monday, October 1 to May 31, except in weeks in which there is a legal or school holiday (Election Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Lincoln's Birthday, Washington's Birthday, Easter Sunday, Decoration Day). Each volume contains twenty-six or twenty-seven issues.

Owner and Publisher, The Classical Association of the Atlantic States.
Place of publication, Barnard College, New York, N. Y.
Editor, Charles Knapp (Barnard College, Columbia University).
Address, 1737 Sedgwick Avenue, New York, New York.

VOLUME XXVIII, No. 17

MONDAY, MARCH 4, 1935

WHOLE NO. 761

READING LATIN AND WRITING LATIN¹

In the Columbia University Quarterly for March, 1931 (23.2-18), "M.H.T.", i.e. Mr. M. H. Thomas, Curator of Columbiana at Columbia University, published a most interesting article under the caption The Black Book of Kings College. The document so described is a record of student misdemeanors and the punishments prescribed therefor during the years 1771-1775. Among the offenses most frequently recorded is neglect in "Collegiate Exercises", and among the penalties most frequently prescribed are additional or double "Exercises".

A frequent offender was one Van Beurin (or Van Bueren). On July 9, 1772, he, along with two others, is charged (5) with having "gone over the College Fence the preceding *Day* Tuesday, between the hours of 3 & 4 P.M. to bathe . . ." For this breach of discipline the three students were to be reprimanded and to be confined to the College "untill the next Saturday evening"; each of them was directed also "to translate into Latin 4 pages of Dr Chandler's Charity Sermon . . ." Either Van Beurin failed promptly to perform this "Exercise", or the performance of the "Exercise" failed to effect a permanent cure, for a little later (8) he is charged with not having prepared his "Exercises", and is ordered to "be confined till the next Saturday, within the College Walls . . . and then to produce to the Presidt. the said Exercises, together with such additions as He shall prescribe". A blanket penalty was prescribed on December 23, 1774, in the following words (13): "Defaulters in all Exercises <are> to perform them before they leave y^e College, in Greek; and to translate, during the Vacation, No. 264 of y^e Spectator, into Latin".

I have referred to these episodes in the early history of Columbia University partly because of their human interest, partly to illustrate the large place held in the educational and disciplinary machinery of that time by "Exercises" in translating English passages into Latin or into Greek.

The large number of defaults recorded for this particular type of assignment and the frequency of its use in single or double measure as a penalty for default or other offenses give eloquent tribute to its reputation for severity, and perhaps by implication to its supposed efficacy as a means of grace.

Few teachers to-day either in College or in School would deliberately employ 'Latin prose composition' as a punitive agent, whatever other values they may

ascribe to it. Indeed its use in our Colleges has all but disappeared as a requirement except as a part of the professional training of prospective teachers of Latin. The large place which it still holds in the Latin program of the Secondary Schools is due for the most part, I believe, to the importance given to it in the examinations set by the College Entrance Examination Board and similar standardizing agencies².

There is all but universal agreement that the primary immediate objective of the study of Latin in School or in College is the progressive development of power to *read* Latin, not to *write* Latin, or to *speak* it, or to *understand* it when spoken. These abilities are rightly rated much more nearly on a par in the study and in the teaching of modern foreign languages. It is true that one occasionally hears a proponent of 'Latin prose composition' claim for it some other value, as, for example, aid in the writing of English, especially in an increased appreciation of the artistic possibilities of word-order. Another will insist that the mental processes involved in writing Latin are such as to give a superior sort of practice in reflective thinking. Most teachers, however, who of their own free will and accord regularly require their students to devote from one-fifth to one-half of their time and energy to the writing of Latin, do so in the belief that this sort of activity is a very valuable, if not an indispensable, means of learning to *read* Latin.

A practice so widespread and so persistent must have some value. Twenty-five thousand teachers, more or less, of Latin in the Secondary Schools cannot be entirely wrong. On the other hand, common sense and the psychology of learning (which after all is only a sort of glorified common sense) would lead one to believe that one learns to do a given thing by doing that thing, not by doing something else; to be specific, we may say that one learns to read a language by *reading* it, not by *writing* it. Evidence of the truth of this statement is to be found in certain facts—that many persons read quite well languages which they can scarcely write at all, that most children learn to read their native language long before they learn to write it, that one 'knows' for recognition purposes many more words in his own or in any given foreign language than he 'knows' well enough to reproduce them, that one more easily comes to 'know' for recognition purposes the various grammatical forms of a given language than to 'know' them for reproduction, and that thousands of human beings all about us are living useful and literate lives without being conscious that there is such a thing as grammar.

¹This paper was read at the Twenty-sixth Annual Meeting of The Classical Association of the Atlantic States, held at Barnard College, Columbia University, April 28-29, 1933.

²George A. Land, The Effect of the Classical Investigation upon Latin Courses in Schools Preparing for College, The Classical Journal 28 (1932), 182. The article covers pages 179-186.

For that matter, grammar, at any rate so far as one's native language is concerned, is of little or no use in every day life except as an occasional guide in writing or in speaking. In the Middle Ages grammar was defined as "ars bene dicendi et bene scribendi" and there was a dictum (of J. C. Scaliger) to the effect that "Grammatici unus finis est recte loqui"³. Jespersen says⁴ that, in the Middle Ages,

One had to learn not only to read Latin, but also to write Latin, if one wanted to maintain no matter how humble a position in the republic of learning or in the hierarchy of the Church. Consequently, grammar was not (even primarily) the science of how words were inflected and how forms were used by the old Romans, but chiefly and essentially the art of inflecting words and using the forms yourself, if you wanted to write correct Latin Grammar was not a set of facts observed but of rules to be observed, and of paradigms, i.e. of patterns, to be followed

A modern descendant of this medieval type of Grammar has recently come to my attention. It is called *A Latin Prose Grammar*⁵. The book is in no sense a 'prose composition book', in the usual meaning of that term. It contains no passages for translation into Latin; it does contain, however, 330 pages of paradigms and rules specifically directed toward turning English into Latin.

In our modern American Latin Grammars many of the rules are stated in such a way that it is quite clear that the authors have in mind turning English into Latin rather than reading Latin or translating it into English. This, after all, is perfectly logical, since Latin grammar to-day, as it was in Cicero's day and in the Middle Ages, is useful as a guide for writing Latin, rather than for reading Latin.

Here are some rules taken from our most recently published Latin Grammar⁶:

313. *As if* is expressed in Latin by **quasi**, . . . with the subjunctive. The verb in such a clause usually follows the rule for the sequence of tenses instead of the principles of contrary-to-fact conditions

314. An *although* clause states or concedes something in spite of which the act of the main clause occurs. It takes

1. the indicative introduced by **quamquam** . . . when the thing stated or conceded is vouched for as a fact

2. the subjunctive introduced by **quamvis** . . . when the writer, or speaker, concedes something hypothetically (without vouching for the truth of it)

307, 2. Would-Should Future Type <of conditional sentence>, denoting what *would hereafter be*, if something *should hereafter be true* (present or perfect subjunctive)

288. Purpose may be expressed by the present or imperfect tense of the subjunctive, introduced as follows

295. When the main verb, upon which a **cum** clause depends, refers to past time, the **cum** clause (whether temporal, causal, or adversative), except as indicated below regularly takes the subjunctive in classical Latin (imperfect or pluperfect, according to the rule for sequence of tenses . . .).

³See Otto Jespersen, *Language, Its Nature, Development, and Origin*, 25 (New York, Holt, 1922).

⁴Jespersen (as cited in note 3, above), 24.

⁵E. L. Churchill and E. V. Slater, *A Latin Prose Grammar* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1927).

⁶H. C. Elmer, *Latin Grammar* (New York, Macmillan, 1928).

<For a review, by Dr. B. W. Mitchell, of this book see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 23.97-102. In the quotations from Professor Elmer's Latin Grammar and from Professor D'Ooge's book the macrons will be omitted. C. K. >

To these examples from a recent Latin Grammar may be added the following rules taken from a first-year Latin Book⁷:

296. Rule for Ablative of Separation. *Words expressing separation or taking away are followed by <sic!> the ablative, often with the prepositions a (ab), de, e (ex)*

367. Rule for the Infinitive Object Clause. *The verbs iubeo, command; cupio, wish; veto, forbid, and the like are often followed by <sic!> an infinitive clause as object.*

Of course it is a poor rule that does not work reasonably well both ways, and in the educative process there probably is not any such thing as a one-track mind. Nevertheless the contemplation of rules such as those just quoted leads one to wonder what proportion of the material in our Latin Grammars is directly useful only for writing or speaking Latin, and just how short and how simple a Latin Grammar would be if it were compiled exclusively as a guide to reading Latin. Would there be, for example, the usual elaborate rules about sequence of tenses? Would there be any extensive treatment of *cum*-clauses? Would there need to be any detailed discussion of what cases are used with the various Latin prepositions? Would there be any point to listing *thirty-one* different uses of the ablative, as is done in the Latin Grammar cited above? Is it not possible that the effort commonly directed to learning to reproduce the declensions and the conjugations could be reduced to learning to recognize and interpret some one hundred inflectional endings?

In other words, is it not altogether probable that *much* of the Latin grammar which we have considered essential for *reading* Latin and for the learning of which we have considered 'prose composition' essential may turn out on investigation to be of value chiefly or exclusively for doing 'Latin prose composition' itself?

When I said earlier in this paper that many teachers of Latin require their pupils to devote as much as half their time in School and out of School to 'Latin prose composition', I included in that estimate the time that goes into English-to-Latin inflection drill, English-to-Latin idiom drill, English-to-Latin vocabulary drill, and the learning of fine distinctions in case, tense, and mood usages which have little or no value except to guide pupils in writing Latin.

If we should limit our consideration to the time actually spent in preparing and reporting on assignments in 'Latin prose composition', we should find a rather wide variation in School practice.

As some of you may remember, one section in the general questionnaire used in connection with the Classical Investigation of 1921-1923 was devoted to the collection of opinions on the place and the purpose in the Secondary Schools of writing Latin, under the circumstances which existed at that time.

In answer to the question "About what proportion of the time do you think should be given to the writing of Latin in the second year?", 2 out of 919 experienced teachers said two-thirds of the time, 29 said two-fifths, 8 said one-half, 35 said one-third, 85 said one-fourth, 608 (the great majority) said one-fifth, 140 suggested

⁷B. L. D'Ooge, *Elements of Latin* (Boston, Ginn, 1921).

various amounts less than one-fifth, and 12 said "none at all".

Of these teachers 62 indicated that for the *third* year of the course they would devote from one-fourth to one-half of the time to writing, 560 would devote one-fifth, 173 would use less than one-fifth, and 28 would use none at all. For the fourth year 44 of these teachers would devote from one-fourth to one-half of the time to writing, 299 would devote one-fifth, 240 less than one-fifth, and 144 none at all⁸.

I do not mean to say that these statements about the proportion of time to be devoted to writing Latin represent present practice. They did not necessarily represent actual *practice* ten years ago, but they did, I believe, fairly represent teacher *opinion* of ten years ago. It may be of interest to note what the same teachers considered the most important values to be gained from the writing of Latin. They were, in order, (1) value for the mastery of Latin forms, (2) value for the mastery of syntactical principles in Latin, (3) value for the mastery of Latin vocabulary, (4) value for the mastery of Latin word-order and of sentence-structure generally, (5) value for the mastery of syntactical principles in English. Among some thirty *additional* values which had the support of one or more teachers were (1) value for a better understanding of English grammar, "since they get it nowhere else", (2) value for understanding that Latin is a language in which "one may say things", (3) value for interest, (4) value for effect on character and disposition.

So much for teacher opinion of ten years ago. Pupil opinion of that same period as reported by Dr. Grise⁹ indicated that 89% of 3,319 fourth-year Latin pupils included in his study liked translating from Latin to English better than translating from English to Latin, while only 11% preferred translating from English to Latin. The reason given by the 11% for their preference was that translating from English into Latin was easier (5%), had more value (2%), they understood it better (1%), and it was more interesting (2%).

In a previous paragraph I made the statement that 'Latin prose composition' had all but disappeared from College courses as a requirement, except as a part of the professional training of prospective teachers of Latin. This statement was based on the answers to inquiries recently sent to the Latin Departments of thirty-two representative Colleges and Universities in the eastern half of the United States. The institutions included in the inquiry were Amherst, Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Chicago, College of the City of New York, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Goucher, Harvard, Hunter, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Mount Holyoke, New York University, Northwestern, Oberlin, Ohio State, Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, Princeton, Radcliffe, Randolph-Macon for Men, Randolph-Macon for Women, Smith, Swarthmore, Vassar, Wellesley, Wesleyan, and Yale.

⁸See also Mark E. Hutchinson, Relative Time Given by High-School Students to 'English into Latin' and 'Latin into English', *School and Society* 37, 335-336 (March 11, 1933).

⁹Finley W. Grise, Content and Method in High-School Latin from the Viewpoint of Pupils and Teachers (George Peabody College for Teachers, 1925). <For a review, by Mr. B. M. Allen, of this monograph see THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 21.112. C. K. >

Replies were received from all the institutions addressed. In answer to the question "Is prose composition required in your Latin course offered to freshmen who enter with four units of credit in Latin?", twenty-seven said "no", five said "yes". The five affirmative answers came from Chicago, Hunter, New York University, Randolph-Macon College for Men, and Randolph-Macon College for Women. The percentage of time devoted to 'Latin prose composition', as reported by the five institutions which require it, ranges from 8 to 30.

In answer to a similar question in regard to Freshmen entering with three units of credit in Latin, twenty-five said "no", five said "yes". Two (Bryn Mawr and New York University) apparently receive no such students.

In a letter accompanying the inquiry 'Latin prose composition' was defined as "the turning of English into Latin—the sort of exercise which is commonly carried on in our Preparatory Schools and which bulks rather large in the College Entrance Examination Board papers in Latin".

In several instances volunteer comments accompanied the formal replies to my inquiry. The head of the Latin Department in one institution protests that its "prose courses, even when elected by freshmen, are *not* the sort of exercise which is commonly carried on in our Preparatory Schools". This writer adds: "I cannot understand how you can say that the easy paragraph which is all that is left of the once reasonable requirement in prose 'bulks rather large' in the entrance examination". I can only say on this point that the paragraph really *does bulk quite large* in the minds of both teachers and pupils who are preparing for the entrance examinations, for one reason because to that item is given a weight of 30 points out of a total of 100 points in the scoring of "Cp. 3" and "Cp. 4".

The head of the Latin Department in another institution says, "All the members of our staff are convinced of the importance of prose composition. We formerly devoted part or most of one hour each week of the three-hour course to prose composition; we are hoping to make it again an integral part of the freshman work, certainly in the first half-year". Another head of a Department accompanied his "no" by an expression of deep regret.

A professor in one of the institutions answering 'yes' says,

I consider this work of inestimable worth, both from the point of view of formal discipline and for its practical value as an aid in attainment of mastery over the subject-matter involved. I know, from my personal experience, gained in the study of seven foreign languages, that I have far more command and control over the languages which I learned to write as well as to read than over those in which I possess primarily only a passive or reading knowledge.

If we turn from the opinions of teachers and pupils to scientific studies of the question, we find very little in the way of objective data to guide us in our efforts to decide what is the optimum proportion of time to be devoted to the writing of Latin, what types of writing are of most worth, or what sorts of teaching techniques

secure the greatest returns for the time and the energy invested.

So far as I know, no significant scientific studies have been made of these questions for Latin. In an unpublished study which one of my students made last year of the results of Latin tests run with sixty-four graduate students at Columbia University during the Summer Session of 1931 it was found that the correlation coefficient between scores in the comprehension of Latin and scores in the translation of English into Latin was .35, while the correlation between comprehension and the recognition of grammatical forms was .64. Professor Henmon¹⁰, in his study of the results of tests in French run with thousands of High School pupils in connection with the Modern Foreign Language Study, found that the correlation coefficient between scores in silent reading and scores in composition was .48, while the correlation between silent reading and vocabulary was .78, and the correlation between silent reading and functional grammar was .75. He found similar relationships in his study of the results of tests in German.

All this means in plain English that the abilities involved in reading a language are more closely related to the abilities involved in recognizing words and grammatical forms than to the abilities involved in writing a language. This is what one might expect, inasmuch as in reading a language one goes from word to idea, while in writing a language one has to go from idea to word. It follows that at least a part of the time and the energy spent in building up the bond idea-to-word is time and energy wasted, if what one really wants to build up is the bond word-to-idea.

What we need, of course, is not opinion or theory, but a series of controlled experiments carefully planned and carefully carried out, in which the 'control group' would devote its *whole* time to reading and to those preparatory supplemental drills which are believed to contribute quite directly to ability to *read*, while the 'experimental group' or 'experimental groups' would deduct a certain fixed proportion of time from practice in reading Latin and devote it to writing Latin and to those preparatory and supplementary drills which are believed to contribute quite directly to ability to *write* Latin. This experiment should continue over a period of at least four years, with frequent tests of ability to read and comprehend Latin as well as tests of those other knowledges, abilities, and skills which are recognized as valid educational values of High School Latin¹¹.

Meantime, it seems to me, teachers of Latin and makers of Latin courses of study may well consider whether or not the Latin program in our Schools (which is unquestionably more difficult in each year of the course than most programs that compete with it for pupils) may not safely be lightened by a considerable reduction in the amount of time and energy devoted to what is commonly known as 'Latin prose composition'. One plan would be to substitute, at least in the early stages, simpler and less time-consuming types of prac-

tice in writing Latin, such as copying, writing from dictation, writing answers to questions, doing 'completion exercises', reproducing passages from memory, doing 're-writes', or preparing résumés. Furthermore, teachers may well consider to what extent they are really making the writing of Latin an *end* rather than a *means*, and as a result are basing the marks they give their pupils too much on ability to write and too little on ability to read. I happen to know that in many Schools marks in Latin are given exclusively or almost exclusively on the results of tests in 'prose composition'. There is a strong temptation to do this, partly because it is so much easier to construct, administer, and score tests in writing Latin than tests in reading or translating Latin.

It seems to me also that the College Entrance Examination Board may well consider reducing the weight which it now gives in its examinations to translating English into Latin. It seems to many teachers quite unreasonable that the Board should assign 30 out of 100 points to the passage set for translation into Latin and only 20 points to the passage set for comprehension, as is now the case in "Cp. 3" and "Cp. 4".

I suggest further that the complete elimination of Latin writing from "Cp. 4", as was proposed in the Report of the Classical Investigation, would do much to encourage pupils to offer four instead of three years of Latin and that this plan would permit teachers of fourth-year Latin to devote much more time than they can at present to cultivating in their pupils literary appreciation and to other activities which are more in keeping with the contents of fourth-year Latin than continued practice in writing Ciceronian prose.

In any case the Board may well consider the desirability of supplementing its official Latin word-list with a list of English words to which those who prepare the passage for translation into Latin would promise to limit themselves, as they do in the preparation of passages for 'comprehension' or for translation into English.

This list could, and should, be much shorter for each year than is the Latin word-list. In an unpublished study made last year by one of my students it was found that only 157 different English words had been used in the six English-to-Latin passages of the "Cp. 2" papers for the years 1929, 1930, and 1931, and that only 247 different English words had been used in the six English-to-Latin passages of "Cp. 3" (or "Cp. 4") for the same years. In view of these facts a basic English-Latin vocabulary of 400 or 500 words would seem to be quite adequate for those who prepare these passages year after year. The publication of an official list of this sort would make it possible for pupils to come up to these examinations with a feeling of confidence rather than with their present well-grounded fear that, no matter how well they know their grammar, they may get 'hung up' on vocabulary.

If, in addition to the English-Latin word-list just proposed, the Board would publish a list of principles of syntax which it expects pupils to know for *writing* purposes, both teachers and pupils would then have much needed guidance, now entirely lacking, in planning and carrying on work in prose composition, admittedly the

¹⁰V. A. C. Henmon, *Achievement Tests in Modern Foreign Language*, 92-93 (New York, Macmillan, 1929).

¹¹See Mark E. Hutchinson, *Fifteen Problems in Latin Teaching Which High-School Teachers Should Help to Solve*, *Educational Outlook* 8 (1933), 43-44.

most difficult part of the Latin program in any School which undertakes to prepare pupils for the College Entrance Board Examinations.

TEACHERS COLLEGE,
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W. L. CARR

COMMENTS ON PROFESSOR CARR'S PAPER

I. BY PROFESSOR ERNST REISS

That Professor Carr opens his paper with a quotation from the Black Book of Kings College in order to prove that so long ago the writing of Latin was imposed on unruly boys as a penalty is a clever *captatio benevolentiae*, though it may well be asked whether these ancient pedagogues did not rather act on the principle of modern penology that the punishment inflicted shall also improve the criminal.

Several points in Professor Carr's paper deserve an answer, since he is invested with the authority of one who sits in the Seats of the Mighty. In general, those of us who have repeatedly listened to his utterances on the teaching of Latin have been forcibly, if not agreeably, impressed by a decided tendency to simplify (oversimplify) and make both easy (too easy) and pleasant the work in this language. We all agree, as a matter of course, that the chief objective of the study of Latin is to bring about the ability to read Latin literature. We further agree that the grammatical preparation for this goal can be considerably simplified—I myself have repeatedly voiced this conviction. Yet I must emphatically dissent from Professor Carr in the steps which he proposes to take. He has advocated publicly before the High School teachers of New York City a radical modification of the Latin vocabulary to be imparted to the young pupils, a modification which, he claims, recognizes that the mental level of these pupils is too low to allow the use of the ordinary Latin vocabulary, which is based on the three recognized model authors. With all my power I wish to oppose this tendency, for it is debasing both for teacher and for pupil. Let me concede for the moment that the youngster of our days lacks the cultural background of family and native country which, we oldsters believe, was ours when we entered the Roman portals. We may also readily, if sadly, concede that no longer are even the elements of grammatical knowledge and terminology the possession of the beginner in Latin. However, from this it follows, not that we must descend to the lower level, but that we must redouble our efforts to draw our students after us to the higher plane. There IS a value in grammatical study which sharpens the wits of the student and compels him, though perhaps only in an elementary way, to apply the laws of logic that lead to clear thinking as opposed to muddiness, an ability which, more even than it was in earlier days, is needed in our perturbed age if we are to produce leaders who know their way. If the writing of Latin contributes its bit to this, then the teaching of 'Latin prose composition' has a value of its own, a value which will be enhanced if we can show that it also helps the student to reach the ability to read Latin.

I take up this second point first. It has been my experience through my years in the class-room of the

Secondary School as well as of the College that a thorough mastery of forms, such as is needed for their instantaneous recognition in the text, is considerably aided by demanding the making of such forms on the part of the pupil. It seems at first blush immaterial whether this aim is achieved by asking for a translation from English into Latin or by asking for Latin answers to Latin questions, a method favored strongly by Professor Carr. Yet experience has taught me that there is an important difference. An alert pupil can often gain the correct answer from the tenor of the Latin question without knowing the reason why he should use this form. Such mental 'fraud' he cannot employ in translating from English into Latin, for there he must be able instantaneously to use the form which is proper to the expression which he is required to translate. This ready command of the proper form cannot fail to be of marked helpfulness to the pupil in his reading of the Latin text. Nor can I grant to Professor Carr that "in reading a language one goes from word to idea, while in writing a language one has to go from idea to word . . ." I have been under the impression that in reading a language we take in, not the words, but connected phrases expressing an idea and that we comprehend this idea immediately and directly. No sensible teacher of Latin, whether he advocates reading for comprehension only or insists on translating, favors a 'word to word' attack on the text. The same process, it seems to me, is used in the rendering of an English sentence into the foreign language; it is, or should be, the aim to express an English IDEA in the form which this idea would have taken in the mind of a Roman. Naturally, in the beginning, where only the simplest ideas can be used, it may appear as if the search were only for words and their correct form. But the very term 'correct' implies that the pupil is required to transpose the *meaning* of a statement from the native speech to the foreign. That in such an exercise, if I may use a word disliked by Professor Carr, the ability to think logically, to analyze clearly a given situation comes prominently into play cannot, I think, be gainsaid. The very fact that this activity is more difficult than the comprehension of a Latin passage, in which, after all, the thought can often be fairly well grasped without a clear insight into the relation of its elements, would seem to commend this procedure rather than condemn it. In more advanced work, certainly, the value of 'Latin prose composition' is even more apparent. If the study of a masterpiece of literature is to result not merely in the assimilation of its contents, but is to lead also to an esthetic appreciation of the artistry by which it was moulded, then I can conceive of no better method for reaching this goal than the attempt to reproduce this artistry by one's own efforts. Quintilian, I believe, has said golden words on this point¹. I may also be permitted to mention here the fact that no less a scholar than Hermann Usener told me once that he never let a week pass without translating either into Greek or into Latin, often even from one of these languages into the other: he found, so he said, that by this method he was sharpening and refining

¹Quintilian 10.2.13-16, 27, 3.2, 4.4, 5.1.

that "Stilgefühl" which is so indispensable a factor in the work of a classical scholar.

I do not wish to follow Professor Carr into his criticism of the syntax statements in the Latin Grammars. A word should be said, however, about the assertion that "fine distinctions in case, tense and mood usages have little or no value except to grade pupils in writing Latin . . ." On the contrary, the knowledge of these *fine distinctions* is of the greatest value for acquiring that understanding of the artistic side of a piece of literature which I—and I trust that I am not alone in this—consider one of the most precious results of the study of literature. It is often said that authors use these distinctions unconsciously and have themselves no knowledge of grammatical refinement. Such a contention is only superficially true. We know enough of the way in which Cicero worked over everything he published until he had achieved what he considered the best way to express his ideas; we know what Horace² said about the time necessary for acceptable work; we have so many statements from Greek and Latin teachers of rhetoric to the same effect that we cannot doubt that the great writers—and our concern is with these alone—*did* make these distinctions *consciously and intentionally*. Therefore it certainly pays the advanced student to attempt their understanding to the utmost of his ability. That is not saying that I do not agree with Professor Carr in asking for a simpler way of teaching both grammar and composition. On the contrary, I believe that several of the topics now treated in Secondary School work are too difficult for that stage and ought to be omitted from the course. Grammars, however, are written not only for the Secondary School pupil, but for College and University students *and for teachers as well*.

Professor Carr seeks to bolster his case by calling attention to the exorbitant amount of time required, which he says may better be devoted to reading. Here no sensible teacher will disagree. Still, I am afraid that he overstates the facts, misled, I suppose by the answers received to his questionnaire, which seem not to have erred on the side of understatement. I condemn as heartily as he does the setting aside of one-half or one-third of the recitation time for this purpose. When I was still directing the work in Latin in a Secondary School, I insisted that the maximum should be one-fifth, preferably less. I was then, and still am, opposed to setting aside a full period for writing Latin. This side of the work should form a part of each recitation and it need not, if properly handled, take up more than a few minutes of the period. The best way, in my opinion, consists in an impromptu exercise, in which the teacher emphasizes the important syntactical points that were brought out in the lesson of the preceding day and makes his English text from the reading assignment of that day. It is true that this requires some ingenuity and additional work from the teacher; it is also true that it interferes with the use and the sale of special textbooks. However, both these considerations are negligible. I am not merely speaking as a theorist; I observed

this procedure as it was very successfully used in one of our City High Schools, a school which had then, and still has, an enviable reputation for its high standing in Greek and in Latin³.

In closing I wish to correct what appears to be a misunderstanding on Professor Carr's part. Hunter College does NOT require 'Latin prose composition' from every student of Latin. 'Composition' is prescribed for all Latin 'majors' who wish to prepare for Secondary teaching. It is true, however, that we urge the instructors, particularly of our lower Freshmen, to strengthen the grammatical knowledge of these students by giving at each meeting a few sentences such as I mentioned a little while ago. That our students appreciate this device is shown by the fact that a number of them enter our 'prose composition' courses although they are not preparing to teach Latin, and that the demand for 'prose composition' work in Greek, where we do not prescribe it for anybody, comes spontaneously almost every term from a number of our girls.

HUNTER COLLEGE

ERNST RIESS

COMMENTS ON PROFESSOR CARR'S PAPER II. BY PROFESSOR GRACE H. GOODALE

Professor Carr's major thesis seems to be that for students of Latin the value of practice in turning English sentences and paragraphs into Latin is negligible. His minor thesis appears to be that the presence of such practice in a curriculum puts Latin at a disadvantage in competitive bidding for students.

With the major thesis my own observation and experience are quite at variance. For twenty-three years I have been dealing with the problems presented by the least advanced course in Latin 'prose composition' offered at Barnard College. I also conducted for many years the Home Study course in 'Latin prose composition'. The Home Study work brought me into contact with many teachers in Secondary Schools in many States, so that I saw something of their problems as well.

It is in the College work that I find my assurance of the value of 'prose composition' as a help to reading. A considerable number of students has been doing both sorts of work with me at the same time, and I have had occasion to note repeatedly in members of the 'prose composition' class the ability to interpret correctly constructions which baffled those who had not handled similar constructions in 'prose composition'.

There are at Barnard College two events in the academic year which test the ability of students to translate with no help from notes or vocabulary Latin passages not previously seen. These events are the examination for the Tatlock Prize in Latin and the Foreign Language Test ("Exit Test") which every student must pass before being regarded as a Senior. For years I have served on one or both of the committees in charge of these examinations, and so had access to the performances of all the participants. I early began to

²Horace, *Ars Poetica* 133-135, 388, 268-269.

³I paid a number of visits to the School to which I refer, and sat in the classes to watch how the system of teaching employed in that School worked.

notice that there was a decided difference in average excellence in the Tatlock Prize papers between those written by students who had taken at least one course in 'Latin prose composition' and those who had taken none. Although the percentages were, of course, not identical from year to year, invariably there was a greater proportion of creditable performances on the part of those who had taken some 'prose composition'. This fact is the more significant because the candidates for the Tatlock Prize are not confined, as might be supposed, to the specially proficient students. Many who know they have no chance of winning take the examination in a sporting spirit and for the unique experience, as one student told me, of taking an examination where there was nothing to lose. The papers, I might add, are numbered, not signed, and the writers are identified only after their work has been evaluated. For years some twenty to forty girls took this examination each year.

The Foreign Language Test in Latin gave the same results (there was a smaller number of students in each examination). The mortality was always heavier among those who had not taken 'prose composition', and the kind of errors that brought down their marks was of the same sort which put Tatlock Prize candidates in the lower half of the competing group. I grant that one learns to read by reading, and to play golf by playing, but *one does not play golf without a club*, and *one does not read readily without a swift and sure comprehension of the significance of language structure*. In one's native tongue that comprehension may come from constantly hearing and reading correct and forceful use of the language, though even here there are added savor and certainty for the reader who understands the anatomy of the organism he is handling. But in the study of a foreign language, especially one which is to be read much and spoken little, the study of the anatomy of the language is especially important, and, so far as my own experience and my observation of my students can determine, especially aided by practice in the writing of the language.

It is surprising how many native Americans 'read' English without *reading* it. They suppose that, because they can pronounce the words and get some vague notion of what it is all about, they are *reading*. But, when it becomes necessary to interpret even a simple narrative sentence, *really* to pass from word to idea (because they must possess the idea before they pass from it to word again in another language), they betray the fact that they never had the idea in their possession in its entirety and in detail. More often than one would expect, 'trouble with Latin' is actually 'trouble with English'. More often than modernist 'educators' like to think, 'trouble with English' springs from an utter ignorance of English grammar. No doubt many have lived and read and even written for the public "without being conscious that there *is* such a thing as grammar" Many generations lived and flourished without being conscious that there is such a thing as a thyroid gland, but there were in each of those generations individuals who died from insufficiency of that gland, or for the same reason dragged on a weary and

ineffective existence. Of course much of the long-ago teaching of Latin was, as it were, *hyperthyroid*, with its years of drill on arbitrary definitions and rules, its indiscriminate insistence on memorized forms in which the future passive infinitive was as important as the first person plural subjunctive. But surely that day is gone forever. It is the *hypothyroid* we must look out for now, in teacher and in textbook, although the textbook does not matter so much if the teacher is able to correct and supplement textbook at need.

No Latin Grammar ever tells the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Grammars that come nearest to doing so are too all-inclusive to be very helpful to young students, except under a good teacher's guidance. But that guidance should be furnished, and pupils should be encouraged to use a real Grammar instead of the selected, sometimes badly selected, excerpts often bound with a High School textbook.

I think it likely that students *are* inclined to fight shy of 'Latin prose composition' courses, but I do not think that inclination is any reason for abandoning those courses. The inclination is often fostered, I am convinced, by difficulties and obstacles not at all inherent in the subject. Attack should be directed to the removal of those difficulties and obstacles rather than to removal of the courses.

If we are quite frank, we shall say that one very common difficulty with courses in 'Latin prose composition' is the teacher's own lack of ability to write readily and with confidence even the simple Latin demanded by Secondary School work. I have certain knowledge that many teachers are, in fact, well equipped to do this, but I have just as certain knowledge that many *are not*, and that to them the necessity of teaching 'prose composition' is a haunting terror, of which they would gladly be rid. Statistics gathered from the performances of their students would hardly constitute a valid indictment of their subject.

It is a harder task to teach 'prose composition' than to teach a reading course. It requires much more command of one's subject and much more agility of mind. You may work out *one* way of writing a sentence that, you are sure, is correct, but, when several other ways turn up in the recitation, what then?

If the course in 'Latin prose composition' includes, as it should, considerable written work to be handed in, corrected and returned, as well as presented and discussed in class, the teacher will be no stranger to the midnight lamp. Of course, one who is content to admit only a single possible rendering, scored by assigning a certain percentage of credit to each previously determined fragment of the sentence, can 'mark' a set of papers with the speed of most mechanical processes. But I should be sorry to believe that many teachers are so content. Good teachers recognize that there are errors and errors, and that a *good* error may show more thought and real comprehension than does some commonplace correctness. How are we to estimate the comparative value for credit and discredit of a flash of genius and a careless oversight? *Why* did a certain girl make a particular error? What line of thought was she following, what comment of the teacher had she mis-

understood or over-stressed, what misinterpretation had she put upon the English sentence? It may take time to puzzle out the answer to such questions, but it pays. The teacher who does it can shape his corrections and criticisms to meet the pupils' real needs, and not, as sometimes happens, merely add bewilderment.

What I have just said about correcting and scoring exercises applies equally to examination papers, and explains why I cannot agree with Professor Carr that "it is much easier to construct, administer, and score tests in writing Latin than tests in reading or translating Latin . . ." I have not, it is true, said anything about the latter tests, nor shall I go into detail in that direction. I shall merely affirm, from my own experience, that a fully satisfactory reading of a paper testing translation does produce an estimate of its value with less intensive and diversified effort than is required for an equally satisfactory estimate of a 'prose composition' paper of even approximate length.

Beyond question the problems with which Professor Carr is dealing are part and parcel of the gigantic problem of American education in general and of Secondary education in particular, involving the special problems of compulsory education. We cannot follow them into all those ramifications, but it would be a mistake to shut our minds to all awareness of such relations. When, as, and if any considerable proportion of those wider problems is successfully solved, that of gaining interested cooperation from our classes in 'Latin prose composition' will be immensely simplified. At present, like everything else, the problem is compli-

cated by the current 'depression'. The competitive bidding for students in which Professor Carr finds Latin at a disadvantage is weighted by the feverish desire of many parents to make the High School a vocational training institution, and the tendency of many in authority to yield to that desire impairs educational results without achieving vocational results. But for this very reason teachers should stand by an unalterable determination to preserve the truly educational function of the School, and should not be traitors to this younger generation which is likely to have such terrific problems to face, such tremendous burdens to carry.

It is doubtless apparent by this time that I value highly the support of practice in 'Latin prose composition' in developing the power to read and enjoy Latin, and the pleasure which may be found in the work itself as a real (if incidental) item in the justification of such work. I have been less specific about the effect of 'Latin prose composition' upon English, but I have at least implied my belief in its value in that relation. Nor is that belief unshared.

I myself believe, as some of my Freshmen do, that the close scrutiny of the meanings of words, the shaping of balanced expression for balanced thought, the regard for prose rhythm, and the other minutiae of 'Latin prose composition', practised in sentences not too elaborate and pretentious for the stage at which we find our students, can and does have its effect upon their use of English prose.

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